Identifying Factors Influencing Fleeing Drivers

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Amy Gore

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Research Supervisors

Dr Jacinta Cording (primary)

A| Prof Virginia McIntosh (secondary)

Author's Note

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Abstract

Fleeing driver events are an increasing problem faced by the New Zealand Police and the wider community. Due to the lack of existing research exploring drivers' motivations for fleeing from police, the current study aimed to identify and outline the motivations, circumstances and decision-making processes that are reported by individuals who have fled from police, and their passengers. The research will contribute to a wider programme of research being conducted by the NZ Police to better understand the facilitators and factors involved in fleeing driver events. Forty semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who have been either the driver or passenger during a police pursuit, and have either been apprehended or successfully evaded. Using thematic analysis, factors that contribute to decisions to flee from police were derived from participant descriptions and conceptualised within four themes (motivations, impacts of substance use, emotions, and consequences/ punishment); patterns were found within the different themes and identified as sub-themes to further highlight relevant circumstances and factors. The study found a common motivation influencing individual's decision to flee was the desire to avoid punishment for other illegal activities; substance use also increased participants' willingness to flee from police. Additionally, Māori, Pasifika and younger participants were more likely to report previous negative experiences with police and general anti-police attitudes as primary motivations for fleeing. The current study indicated that very few participants reported deliberately seeking to engage in a pursuit, but that fleeing was a byproduct of previous illegal activity.

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Fleeing Driver Events in New Zealand

As part of keeping the community safe and enforcing laws, police frequently signal vehicles to stop for various reasons such as random breath testing, driver licence checks, identifying disqualified drivers, and intervening when individuals are driving in a high-risk manner, or engaging in suspected criminal offending (IPCA & NZ Police, 2019). NZ Police (2010) reported that approximately 2.5 million vehicles are signaled to stopevery year, averaging 7,000 daily stops. However, there are occasions where drivers do not stop when signalled and instead make the decision to flee from police.

The NZ Police and Independent Police Conduct Authority define a 'fleeing driver' as a driver who has been signalled to stop by police but fails to do so (NZ Police & IPCA, 2019). A 'fleeing driver event' therefore encompasses the time from when a vehicle is originally signalled to stop, the decision is made to pursue, the event of the pursuit, and the events that occur following the pursuit. There has been an increase in fleeing driver events in New Zealand over time, with a 63% increase in events between 2011 and 2017 (from 2,328 events to 3,796 events, respectively; NZ Police & IPCA, 2019). These fleeing drivers expose road users to substantial risk, as fleeing drivers can adopt high-risk driving behaviours in an attempt to evade police. Of the 3,796 chases in 2017, 626 resulted in associated crashes, 180 of which occurred after police had abandoned the pursuit. Further, these pursuits were associated with 158 injuries and 12 fatalities (NZ Police & IPCA, 2019).

Police Initiatives

Punishment

Due to the substantial risk posed by fleeing driver events, it is Police priority to reduce the number of pursuits and associated harm. Along with more severe criminal penalties, police have adopted a range of initiatives and strategies to minimise fleeing driver events and deter individuals from engaging in an event. The following section will address Police initiatives to reduce pursuits. The extent to which criminal sanctions for fleeing police are having an appreciable impact on fleeing driver events is unclear. According to the Land Transport Amendment Act (2017) if an individual is caught for the first time after failing to stop or failing to remain stopped for police they can be fined up to $10,000 (NZD). A six-month disqualification can be imposed if the individual exceeded the speed limit or drove dangerously. The maximum penalty for a second offence is a $10,000 fine, if the offender has exceeded the speed limit or driven dangerously a disqualification from holding or obtaining a licence for one year can be imposed. If it is an offender's third or further fleeing driver incident they can incur the same monetary fine, imprisoned for three months, and disqualified from holding a licence for two years if they engaged in dangerous driving or exceeded the speed limit. In addition, police can seize and impound a vehicle for 28 days upon an individual's failure to stop or to remain stopped. These penalties were a part of the New Zealand Land Transport Act amendment in August 2017 with the aim to highlight the severity and risks involved in a fleeing driver incident (Land Transport Amendment Act, 2017, ss 40-43).

Police Tactics

There are a small number of common ways that a fleeing driver event can be resolved, either the pursuit is called off, the offending vehicle stops voluntarily, or the police use a range of tactics to help stop the vehicle involuntarily. Tactics employed by police include the use of tyre deflation devices, which are utilised to disable vehicle's tyres and can be deployed by a unit stationed ahead of the fleeing driver's route. A review conducted by the New Zealand Police and Independent Police Conduct Authority (2019) highlighted that although the tyre deflation device is effective in destroying the offending vehicle's tyres, seldom do the offenders stop driving; rather they often continue to drive on shredded tyres (IPCA & NZ Police, 2019). Another tactic employed by police to mitigate fleeing driver events is the use of an Air Support Unit, (i.e. Eagle helicopter) operated by a team of police officers trained to provide air support. The air support team provides commentary for the police vehicles engaged in a fleeing driver incident, reports on traffic conditions and the behaviour of the driver, as well as tracking the fleeing vehicle from a safe distance. Another tactic that can be utilised by the police to resolve a fleeing driver event is through a non-compliant vehicle stop through the use of a controlled collision, however, only the Armed Offender's Squad and the Special Tactics Group can execute this tactic (NZ Police & IPCA, 2019).

The success of the above tactical options depend on many factors, the first is the availability of equipment, having staff suitably trained to use the equipment, staff need to be able to identify potential escape routes, environmental factors such as time, place, and type of vehicle being pursued are also influential on the success of police tactics. The review conducted by IPCA & NZ Police (2019) indicated that often the most effective tactic for police to employ is to carry out further inquiries to identify the

driver, rather than engaging in a pursuit as it increases offender accountability. However, the identification of only 91 fleeing drivers out of 191 police reported fleeing drivers considered by the IPCA & NZ Police (2019) review suggests limited engagement or success by staff in the inquiry and investigation phase. The review found that the inquiry phase after a fleeing driver event is minimal with room for improvement. Further, the review highlighted limited staff engagement in inquiries and investigations decreases offender accountability. Therefore, if offenders aren't being held accountable for engaging in fleeing driver events it could increase the likelihood of re-offending, as the current initiatives are not deterring them.

Deterrence

Deterrence Theory

As offenders are being signalled to pull over, in that moment, they make a decision whether or not to comply with police instruction. The decision to flee highlights both non-compliance and a lack of deterrence. Central to classical deterrence theory are the objective and perceptual properties of sanction threats (celerity, certainty, and severity). This suggests that in order to be an effective deterrent, punishment should be swift, certain, and proportionate to the crime (Beccaria, 1986). Deterrence theory encompasses both specific deterrence and general deterrence. Specific deterrence suggests that those who commit a crime and are caught, and effectively punished will be deterred from committing that crime again. General deterrence suggests that the wider community will be deterred from committing the same crime once they are aware of the punishment. However, the effectiveness of both specific and general deterrence are dependent on the individuals' decision making and perception of the severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment (Tomlinson, 2016).

It is clear that despite the current punishments for evading police in New Zealand fleeing driver events remain a problem. The legal consequences of fleeing, as outlined above, may fail to meet the requirements of an effective deterrent on a number of levels: offenders are not being held accountable due to the lack of engagement in the inquiry and investigation phase, if the offender is apprehended legal outcomes often occur many months or years after the actual offending; and fleeing from police may provide an opportunity to evade capture, thereby reducing the certainty of consequences. The following section explores this suggestion in more detail, outlining how temporal discounting, delay discounting, and punishment avoidance can be adopted to illustrate how the objective and perceptual properties (celerity, certainty, and severity) of legal consequences impacts offender decision-making in fleeing drivers.

Offender Decision-making

Temporal discounting highlights the role of time in decision making, as making an outcome less salient depending on its delay (Barkley et al., 2001). Conversely, delay discounting refers to how fast a reward decreases in value due to the time it takes to get that reward or how delayed it is (Mamayek et al., 2017). Together, these key psychological principles suggest that when an individual is making a decision on whether or not to offend, immediate consequences become more salient and less weight is placed on the delayed consequences (Mamayek et al., 2017).

Using a sample of offenders (n= 63) and non-offenders (n=70), Arantes et al (2013) investigated whether criminal offenders discount future rewards faster than non-offenders. The study found that the offending population had significantly higher discounting rates (M = 166 sec), thus, were more likely to discount future rewards compared to non-offenders (M = 65 sec). The results of this study suggest that offenders place a greater weight on the immediate consequences compared to consequences

delayed over time, indicating a deficit in delay discounting. In relation to the current study, these findings could suggest that when making decisions, individuals who flee from police are influenced by time and are more likely compared to those who pull over when signalled, to disregard future consequences when deciding whether or not to flee.

In addition, research has indicated that avoiding punishment after committing an offence can also contribute to the individual's belief that they will not be apprehended. Punishment avoidance can be utilised to demonstrate how the lack of offender accountability following a fleeing driver event is detrimental to deterrence. Stafford & Warr (1993) explain punishment avoidance as a situation in which a person commits a criminal offence, but avoids apprehension and punishment. Once an individual has experienced punishment avoidance their offending may increase, as their perception of the certainty of sanction threats of being caught is low. Two main processes influence an offenders' decision to re-offend following punishment avoidance. The first is confirmation bias, where an individual will focus on facts that support what they were already thinking, and dismiss facts that challenge their thoughts. For example, in the case of a fleeing driver event if the offender holds anti-police attitudes they could be more likely to flee as they may interpret the situation as the police are trying to harm them. The second process is observation selection, where similar to confirmation bias, the individual will only highlight favourable outcomes of their actions whilst dismissing unfavourable outcomes (Stafford & Warr, 1993). In the case of a fleeing driver event, the offender could focus on the advantages of getting away whilst disregarding future consequences.

Piquero & Pogarsky (2002) tested Stafford and Warr's (1993) reconceptualization of general and specific deterrence, with 250 students. The study's finding were in line with the model's predictions, highlighting a significant positive

relationship between personal experiences of punishment avoidance and future offending (r (248)=.30, p <.01), and a significant negative relationship between avoiding punishment and estimates of the certainty of punishment (r (248)=-.24, p <. 01). These findings indicate that personal experiences with punishment avoidance increase risk for future offending and decrease perceptions of the risks involved with offending. These relationships were also identified for vicarious punishment avoidance i.e. witnessing others avoiding punishment. This suggests that experiencing someone else avoid punishment after committing a crime can reduce an individuals' perception of certainty of punishment, as well as increase their likelihood of offending.

In order to replicate the study above, Sitren (2007) used a sample of 326 offenders to test Stafford & Warr's (1993) theory. Sitren (2007) found a significant positive relationship between the likelihood of offending and personal punishment avoidance for drunk driving (r(324)=.23, p <.01), as well as the likelihood of offending and personal punishment avoidance of shoplifting (r(324)=.17, p <.01). These findings indicate that punishment avoidance experiences significantly increased respondent's intentions to drive drunk and shoplift.

In relation to the current study the above results suggest that, as some fleeing drivers in New Zealand are not being held accountable after engaging in a pursuit, instead experiencing punishment avoidance, which decreases their perceived certainty of punishment. Temporal and delay discounting can contribute in explaining how offenders place greater weight on the immediate consequences and disregard future consequences. Together, these effects are likely to increase the likelihood of engaging in future fleeing driver events, perhaps partially explaining the increased rate of fleeing driver events over time. In order to further understand the decision making of individuals who flee from police and what may deter them, it is important to identify

the individual characteristics and motivations of those who flee. The following section therefore outlines what the existing literature indicates about these characteristics and motivations, using the Prototype Willingness Model (Gerrard et al., 2008) as a framework for this information.

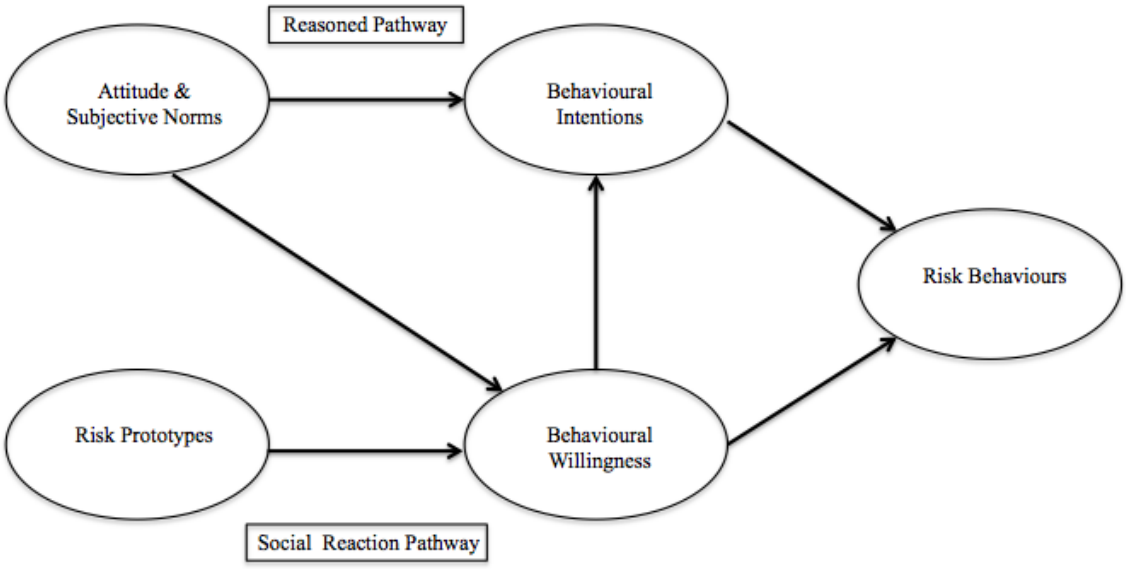
Fleeing Driver Characteristics

Prototype Willingness Model

The Prototype Willingness Model of adolescent decision making was designed to examine cognitive factors influencing health behaviour (Gerrard et al., 2008). The Prototype Willingness Model is a dual-process model based on an assumption that initial adolescent risk behaviour, although volitional, is neither intended nor planned. Risk behaviour is rather a response to conditions that are risk conductive. However, it acknowledges that some behaviour is intentional, this will be explained through pathway one. The Prototype Willingness Model incorporates two pathways; see Figure 1 below (Barati et al., 2015). The reasoned pathway indicates that some adolescent risk behaviour is intentional. Central to this pathway are individuals' behavioural intentions, which vary as a function of attitudes and injunctive norms (Gerrard et al., 2008); attitudes highlight the overall positive or negative evaluations of behaviour, and injunctive norms illustrate what an individual perceives as right based on their morals or beliefs. The second pathway is described as the social reaction pathway, in which an individual engages in heuristic processing. This pathway aims to explain adolescent risk behaviour that is unintended and unplanned, and encompasses two important constructs: risk prototype, and behavioural willingness.

Figure 1

Prototype Willingness Model



Note. This figure was reproduced from Barati, M., Allahverdipour, H., Hidarnia, A., & Niknami, S. (2015). *Journal of research in health sciences*, *15*(2), 113-118.

Risk prototypes are explained as the "cognitive representations or social images of the type of person who engages in specific risk behaviours" (Gerrard et al., 2008, p. 36); there are two components that make up prototype perception. The first is prototype similarity, that is, how much an individual resonates with or relates to the prototype or the 'type' of person who engages in certain risk behaviour. An additional element of prototype similarity is perceived vulnerability, which highlights the perceived chance that one would experience a consequence if they were to engage in the risk behaviour. Therefore, if an individual relates to someone who has successfully evaded police, they will possess greater levels of prototype favourability (i.e. relatedness to the person) and low levels of perceived vulnerability (i.e. perceived likelihood of facing consequences

for the same action). The second component of the risk prototype is prototype favourability: this relates to how positive an individual views the prototype. The more favourable and similar an individual views the prototype, the more likely and willing they are to engage in the behaviour demonstrated by the prototype. A factor affecting the levels of prototype favourability is the descriptive norms. Descriptive norms refer to the perceived frequency and quantity of peer behaviour. In the case of fleeing drivers, a descriptive norm could be that an individual's peers frequenting evade from police, they themselves would be more likely to flee as it is perceived as common or normal to do so.

The second important construct and central to the Prototype Willingness Model is behavioural willingness. This is defined as "recognition that one would be willing to engage in the behaviour under some circumstances" (Gerrard et al., 2008, p.36). This overall willingness to engage in risky behaviour highlights the unplanned and unexpected nature of the social reaction pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model. In addition, Gerrard et al (2008) indicated that the reasoned and social pathway can operate at the same time to increase an individual's willingness to engage in risky behaviour.

A study conducted by Harbeck & Glendon (2018) applied the Prototype Willingness Model to a sample of 554 drivers (17-25 years old) to investigate how risky driver prototype's similarity, favourability, and behavioural willingness influenced their perceived risk and reported engagement in risky driving behaviours. Results indicated negative, moderate relationships between higher behavioural willingness (r= -.42, p<.001), prototype favourability (r= -.40, p<.001), and prototype similarity (r= -.38, p<.001), and perceived risk. These results indicate that the more willing and individual was, and the more they related to and positively viewed the prototype of risky driving,

the less risky they perceived the behaviour. When applied to fleeing driver events, the Prototype Willingness Model would suggest that adolescents who had greater behavioural willingness and viewed other fleeing driver as favourable and similar to them would be more likely to attempt to evade from police if the right situation were to present itself. The following sections outlines what the existing literature indicates are the key characteristics of fleeing drivers, such as, age, gender, criminal history, and motivations.

Age

There are very few studies that look into the individual motivations and characteristics of people who flee from police. Of the few, a noticeable theme throughout the literature is that fleeing from police is an offence most commonly committed by young adults. Studies have investigated fleeing driver characteristics using samples of individuals who had been apprehended following a pursuit, findings suggest the most typical age of a fleeing driver is between 20-26 (IPCA & NZ Police, 2019; Brewer & McGrath, 1991; Dunham et al., 1998; Halsey, 2008; Alpert & Dunham, 1990).

Previous research suggests that young people are more likely to take risks compared to their older counterparts, and more so when their peers are present. One study using a sample of 306 participants across three age groups found that younger people were more likely to take greater risks ($F(1, 284)$ 18.79, $p < .0001$) and engage in more risky decision making ($F(1, 288)$ 24.599, $p < .0001$) compared to their older counterparts (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005). These findings highlight that age had a significant effect on decision-making. Further, the study found that participants who completed the measures with their peers present engaged in greater risk-taking during the risk-taking game ($r = .22$ $p < .05$), as well as weighting the benefits greater than the

costs of the risky activities. Results highlighted that peer presence varied as a function of age on the risk-taking measure, ($r = .12$, $p < .05$), and the risky decision-making measure, ($r = .13$ $p < .05$), indicating that the older participants' decisions were less affected by the presence of their peers compared to their younger counterparts. The findings from this study suggested that compared to their older counterparts, adolescents take more risks, rate risky behaviour more positively, and make greater risky decisions when their peers are present.

These findings could be explained by another study indicating that during puberty and adolescence, the presence of peers activates a reward-sensitive motivational state (Albert et al., 2013). When a reward- sensitive state is activated, individuals experience an increased preference for immediately available rewards, thus increasing the salience of short-term benefits of risky choices over the need for the long-term value of safer decisions. In relation to fleeing drivers, the findings from both of these studies suggest that younger people are more likely to take make risky decisions when in the presence of their peers. The presence of their peers could influence the driver's initial decision to flee from police, their likelihood that they take greater risks when fleeing from police, or both.

Previous research has explored the role of age and experience in risk of accidents during police pursuits (Lockie et al., 2018). The study found that there was a moderate effect of age on course time (d=0.69, $p < .05$), with the age group 20-39 completing the driving test significantly faster than the age group 40-59. The study also identified a moderate- large effect of age on the number of violations (d= 0.74, p<.05) with the younger age group accumulating greater violations during the test. The study highlighted that younger drivers may not perceive that they are at greater risk compared with their older counterparts, indicating that this could be the result of dissociation of

their perceived and actual driving ability. The findings from the above literature highlight a characteristic for the 'risk prototype' of offenders that flee from police. Suggesting that younger individuals could possess more behavioural willingness to engage in fleeing driver events as they hold greater prototype similarity and potentially more prototype favorability for the type of person that flees from police.

Gender

Another reoccurring theme throughout literature investigating characteristics of fleeing drivers using samples of apprehended offenders is that 94%- 97% are male (IPCA & NZ Police, 2019;Brewer & McGrath, 1991; Dunham et al., 1998; Alpert & Dunham, 1990). This finding is replicated a broader pattern of males being at a higher risk of offending in general. In order to explain the gender gap in offending, Durrant (2019) proposed the Biosocial Integration Model. The focal point of the Biosocial Integration Model is that the gender gap in offending can be understood as the developmental outcome of interactions between genetic and non-genetic evolutionary pathways. The genetic pathway suggests that the gender gap in offending is reflective of males' greater engagement in risk-taking, sexual motivation, status-seeking, dominance, and intra-sexual physical aggression. These male characteristics are a product of genes on the Y chromosome and related to prenatal exposure to testosterone, leading to organisational differences between the male and female brain. These differences can be illustrated in temperamental disparities between males and females, such as males possessing higher activity levels, and lower levels of fear and effort control. These temperamental differences in childhood manifest into psychological traits and characteristics in adolescence and adulthood, the interaction of non-genetic

factors such as ecological and social factors can lead to greater male involvement in offending behaviour on average.

The second pathway of the Biosocial Integration Model is the non-genetic evolutionary pathway Durrant (2019) explains that not only is there a contrast in what genes males and females inherit, but also the ecological and social worlds they are born into. The dynamic features of social environments can either ‘amplify’ or ‘dampen’ the genetic differences between males and females. For example, norms, values, institutions, and gradients in economic equality may influence developmental processes that will either encourage or discourage gender differences, including those that relate to criminal offending (for males, aggression and dominance are more condoned; greater emphasis on social status; lower levels of social control; more opportunities for offending); (Durrant, 2019).

The process of interactions between the genetic and non-genetic evolutionary pathways proposed by Durrant (2019) highlights that males may have a genetic predisposition to engage in risky behaviours, and the interaction with particular social environments can amplify these genetic differences. The findings from the above literature could demonstrate a characteristic for the 'risk prototype' of offenders that flee from police, as well as highlighting attitudes and subjective norms that contribute to male offending. The identification of a risk prototype, attitudes, and subjective norms suggests that males could possess more behavioural willingness to engage in fleeing driver events as they hold greater prototype similarity and potentially more prototype favorability for the type of person that flees from police.

Criminal History

Another characteristic common of fleeing drivers identified in the literature is that those who decide to flee are more likely to have a criminal history than not. Drawing from 159 case files (91 of cases were identified by Police, and 68 were identified by the IPCA 'Authority Cases') of offenders who have fled from police and been apprehended, a review IPCA & NZ Police (2019) indicated that for fleeing drivers their offending is part of a wider scope of offending. They found that 50% of police cases and 68% of authority cases who had fled from police were active or serious persistent criminal offenders. The review also indicated that 49% of the police cases and 57% of the authority cases had previously been in prison. Further, the review indicated that only 13% of offenders across both samples of fleeing drivers had no criminal history.

Research conducted outside of New Zealand has also found higher rates of previous offending among fleeing drivers. Using a sample of 143 high-speed pursuit records of fleeing drivers who had been apprehended in Australia, Brewer & McGrath (1991) identified that 55.3% of drivers had prior convictions, and when compared with those individuals without prior convictions they were more likely to be unemployed (19% vs 65%, respectively). The above findings could be explained by those of Lane & Cherek (2000) who investigated risk-taking among adults with a history of high-risk behaviour. The results indicated that compared to the control group, the high-risk group made significantly greater risky responses resulting in lower overall earnings. Compared to the control group, the participants with a history of high-risk behaviour were more likely to continue making risky responses (resulting in a loss) following a single risky response that resulted in a monetary gain. The findings from this study suggested that individuals with a history of high-risk behaviour display an

oversensitivity to reward, and insensitivity to aversive consequences making them more likely to engage in risky decision making (Lane & Cherek, 2000) . The above literature could suggest that individuals with a criminal history could possess more behavioural willingness and behavioural intention to engage in a fleeing driver event, in addition, as they have previously offended they could possess high levels of prototype favorability and prototype similarity.

Fleeing Driver Motivations

As highlighted above, the literature investigating motivations of individuals that flee from police is sparse. However, three relevant studies were identified, all of which indicate that avoiding punishment and criminal sanction are common factors increasing an individual's willingness to evade police.

Dunham et al (1998) investigated the characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs of 144 individuals who had fled from police and been apprehended. The study found that the most common reason reported for not stopping for police when signalled was because the individual was in a stolen car (32%). Additionally, 27% of participants reported their reason for evading was driving with a suspended licence, 27% of participants indicated that they were running from a crime scene or running to avoid arrest, 21% indicated that they were driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol and didn't want to face police, and a further 21% said they decided to evade police as they were afraid of being beaten by police on apprehension. Further, the study found that when asked what the suspects were thinking during the chase, the majority (75%) responded that they didn't feel safe and that they wanted to be free from police authority. The study also used regression analysis to identify variables that were most strongly related to the offenders' willingness to engage in further risk-taking to

successfully evade police. Six variables were identified as significant: being previously caught by police; if the offender thought about the legal punishment they would receive if they were apprehended; offenders' concern for their own safety if they were apprehended rather than being concerned for their own safety during a chase; driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs; offenders' was concern for others safety; and avoiding arrest. Together these six variables predicted 77% of the variance in risk-taking.

The effects of punishment avoidance have also been highlighted as increasing an individual's behavioural intention and willingness to engage in fleeing driver events. Another historical study conducted by The California Highway Patrol (1983) analysed officers' impressions of suspects' motivations for evading police. Although the data set has many limitations, the study indicated that the most common reasons officers suggested that offenders fled was to avoid punishment for driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, to avoid punishment for being caught in a stolen vehicle, and to avoid a penal code related arrest.

A more recent qualitative study conducted by Cherbonneau & Jacobs (2019) interviewed 25 offenders who had been previously apprehended for stealing cars. Again, the study found that offenders' attempts to evade police was commonly motivated by the desire to avoid criminal sanction. The findings suggested that when the offenders were signalled they were either engaged in something illegal or were about to commit a crime. In addition, the study found that offenders would adopt tactics to successfully evade police. These included having an accomplice to travel in a legitimate car whilst being in a stolen vehicle, increase speed, tactically taking side streets as motorways had a high police presence, creating a suitable level of danger on

the roads to influence police to call off the chase, and finally, running on foot if the pursuit was lasting too long.

The studies identified above highlight a dominant theme in offenders' motivation to flee from police. That is, that the idea of pulling over when signalled means certain punishment or criminal sanction, thus, the flight response emerges in an attempt to avoid the risk of sanction. Further, these findings suggest that a major factor increasing an individual's behavioural willingness to evade police is to avoid punishment.

There has been an abundance of research conducted to identify factors contributing to individual police officers' decisions to pursue fleeing drivers, whereas very little attention has been paid to decisions made by drivers before, during, and after a police pursuit. It is possible, however, that identified factors that contribute to police officers' decisions may also apply to the fleeing drivers, particularly where these factors relate to broader cognitive or emotional processes relating to behaviour or decision-making more broadly. One such study conducted by Homant et al (1998) investigated the relationship between sensation-seeking and police pursuits. The results indicated a significant correlation between the officer's total sensation-seeking score and tendencies to pursuit a fleeing driver (r (67) =.26, p<.05). There was also a significant correlation between sensation seeking and thrill and adventure-seeking (r (67) = .20, p<.05). Findings from the study also highlighted a negative correlation between age and total sensation-seeking scores (r (67) = -.33, p<.05), as well as a negative correlation between age and pursuit tendencies (r (67) = -.21, p <.05). This study highlights age and sensation seeking as individual factors contributing to the likelihood of pursuing a fleeing driver. In relation to the current study, the above findings suggest that younger

individuals with high levels of sensation seeking, thrill and adventure-seeking may also be more likely to flee from police.

Rationale and significance of the study

The above literature highlights potential individual characteristics and motivations that increase an individuals' behavioural willingness and intention to flee from police. These characteristics include individual decision making, lack of effective deterrence initiatives, age, gender, criminal history, punishment avoidance, substance use, fear of mistreatment from police, and the use of techniques to get away. As indicated above, previous studies that have investigated the individual characteristics and motivations of fleeing drivers have done so using a sample of participants that have been apprehended. The current study is therefore novel as it investigates the factors influencing fleeing drivers using a sample of offenders that have been apprehended, as well as offenders who successfully evaded. This gap in the literature highlights an opportunity for more research to increase the understanding of factors that contribute to fleeing drivers' behaviours and decision-making processes. An increased understanding of these factors could directly inform police pursuit policy, enabling them to make safer decisions and respond more effectively to fleeing driver events, and could also aid in preventing the offending in the first place.

Aim of the study

The current study aimed to identify and outline the motivations, circumstances and factors that contribute to an individual's decision to flee from police. This was achieved by drawing on factors reported by individuals who have fled from police, and their passengers. This information will contribute to our understanding of the

facilitators and factors involved in fleeing driver events, with the view to ensuring that New Zealand Police pursuit policy fits with the empirical evidence for how police pursuits are best initiated and conducted to keep drivers, police, and the wider community safe.

Objectives

The aims of the research were captured by the following key objectives:

1. To identify the external and internal factors that contribute to drivers' decisions to flee from police.
2. To determine the impacts of potential punishments or negative consequences on decisions to flee from police.

Primary Research Questions

The primary research questions that guided the current research were as follows:

1. What reasons do individuals report as to why they flee from police?
2. What do offenders who are under the influence of alcohol/drugs say as to why they flee?
3. What emotions and thoughts do fleeing drivers experience before, during and after a pursuit?
4. Do offenders who flee police believe they will be apprehended?

As the research was exploratory in nature, there were no hypotheses made.

Method

Design

As this study sought to explore a novel research area, it is exploratory in nature. A qualitative, retrospective design was used for data collection; qualitative methods are commonly adopted to explore, interpret, or obtain a more comprehensive understanding of certain aspects of human beliefs, attitudes or behaviour (Burnard et al., 2008). Given the lack of existing research in this area, a qualitative and exploratory design was considered most suited to this particular research project.

Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 42 individuals who had self-reported being involved in a police pursuit, either as a driver or a passenger. Two of these individuals were removed from the research sample because they had fled police on foot rather than in a car; this left a total of 40 individuals included in analyses.

The aim was to recruit a sample that was largley representative of the demographics of officially recorded drivers who have fled from police in New Zealand. Of the 40 individuals included in analyses, 19 (48%) had been drivers in a police pursuit, 18 (45%) had been passengers, and three (7.5%) had been both a driver and a passenger. Participant demographics are provided below in Table 1. Approximately half of the participants were aged under 20. There was a relatively even split of participants who identified as Māori (40%) and those who identified as Pākehā (48%), with the remainder identifying as Pasifika (13%). Participants were predominately male (70%).

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Age Groups	Under 20	20-24	24-39	40+	Total
Total	22 (55%)	2 (5%)	13 (33%)	3 (8%)	40
Gender					
Male	16	2	8	2	28 (70%)
Female	6	0	5	1	12 (30%)
Ethnicity					
Māori	12	0	3	1	16 (40%)
Pasifika	1	2	2	0	5 (13%)
Pākehā	9	0	8	2	19 (48%)

Research Frist (a strategic research agency) was contracted by the research team to conduct recruitment for the study. A variety of strategies were used to initially recruit individuals who had either been a passenger or driver involved in a fleeing driver event. These included advertisements on public forums, reaching out to residential facilities run by Oranga Tamariki. Once potential participants had been identified, Research First contacted the potential participants and sent out an information sheet detailing the purpose of the study. If the potential participants were interested in completing the study they would indicate to Research First that they were willing to do so. From here, participants who self-reported being involved in a police chase, either as a driver or a passenger were provided with a consent sheet as well as a full verbal description of the study. Once consent was obtained, a snowballing technique was utilised to recruit further participants, whereby participants provided the recruitment partners with referrals of individuals they knew of who have either been a passenger or driver in a fleeing driver event. The recruitment team liaised with both the participants and

interviewers to schedule a time for the interview to be conducted, either over the phone or face to face.

In the case of the Oranga Tamariki residence, the staff from the residence identified potential participants and provided them with the information. The staff then contaced the research team to arrange a session time. Once in the interview, the resarch team explained the study to the participants in more detail and obtained consent.

Materials

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researchers and Research First developed a semi-structured interview guide based on the main research questions of the study. The interview guide consisted of six key questions that allowed both parties to diverge from the pre-determined structure of the interview in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. This style of interviewing allows for participants to report their experiences according to their own priorities, understandings and interpretations, allowing for the discovery or elaboration of information that is salient to the participants but has not been thought of by the research team (Burnard et al., 2008). Prompts were also included in the interview guide for the interviewer to draw upon in the event that information wasn't spontaneously offered.

Initially, participants were thanked for their time, given another overview of the study, and verbal consent was obtained. Participants were then asked what their general thoughts were around police chases. This was helpful as it gave the interviewer an indication of the participants' general feel or view on fleeing driver incidents. Participants were then asked to describe their experience or experiences in a fleeing driver incident, and what their involvement in the event was. If the participant indicated that they had been in more than one chase, they were asked to draw upon the one that was most salient to them, and if time allowed the interviewer would then discuss areas

of similarity or difference with other pursuits the participant had been in. Probes that could be drawn from by the interviewer in this section consisted of what was happening before, during, and after the chase, if they knew the area well, who else was in the car, if there was anything going on in their life during the time, and what their previous experiences with police were like.

The next section of the interview guide encompassed questions about what the participant was thinking about before, during, and after the chase. The interviewers could draw upon probes regarding thoughts about whether the police would chase or not, if the participant had a plan during the chase, what the participants thoughts were regarding punishment.

In the third section of the interview guide, participants were asked to describe what their emotions were before, during, and after the chase. Participants were then asked about what they thought their chances of apprehension was, and what evidence helped to build that belief.

Finally, participants were asked what had changed for them after the chase. Probes that would be drawn upon by interviewers included whether the participant talked to anyone about the chase, if their experience in a chase made them more or less likely to get into another fleeing driver event, what their feelings were looking back on the chase, and if there was anything they would do differently. Participants were then asked if there was anything else they would like to disclose and were thanked for their time.

Procedure

After participants were recruited through the process detailed above, a time was scheduled for the interview to take place either face-to-face or via phone call.

Interviews were generally facilitated over the phone and took between 20-40 minutes to complete. However, face-to-face interviews were conducted with twelve young people in an Oranga Tamariki residence.

Two interviewers facilitated each semi-structured interview with a team of four interviewers conducting interviews in total, if a participant identified as Pasifika or Māori efforts were made to match them with an interviewer who identified as Māori. In the case of a phone interview, the interviewers would call the participant to begin the interviews. In the case of face-to-face interviews, the interviewers travelled to the Oranga Tamariki residence to speak with the young people.

Verbal informed consent to participate in the research was obtained from each participant. With the consent of the participant, the interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. During the interview, participants were asked to describe their experiences in the fleeing driver event, as well as describe their thoughts and emotions before, during, and after the chase. Participants were asked if there was anything further they would like to add, or if there was anything they wanted to ask the interviewer. Following the interview, participants were provided with a koha of a $50 voucher of their choice (either supermarket, book, or clothes voucher). Ethics approval for the research was obtained from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, ref HEC 2020/26. Additional ethics approval was also obtained from Oranga Tamariki prior to engaging with young people recruited through Oranga Tamariki

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes and sub-themes in the data relevant to the circumstances and factors that contribute to decisions to flee from police. Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative research to identify, analyse, and

report patterns within the data. Thematic analysis allows for the organisation of the data set and provides an in-depth description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has been described as a flexible research tool due to the fact that it is independent of theory and epistemology.

Braun & Clarke (2006) highlighted the six phases of thematic analysis that were followed to structure the data analysis in the current study. The first phase is identified as the ‘familiarisation’ phase, whereby the researcher learns the content of the data set by reading and re-reading the items, transcribing, listening to the audio, and writing down initial ideas. The next phase involves systematically coding the data to 'generate initial codes'; a code is flagged or a label that highlights something interesting about the data. Generating initial codes is followed by the 'searching for themes' phase; the identification of themes illustrates meanings throughout the data set. The researchers will then 'review the potential themes' identified; this is done by assessing whether the themes highlight the datasets most prominent features and answer the research question. The next phase is the 'defining and naming phase’; this is where the researcher will apply definitions to each theme in order to address each research question. The final phase of thematic analysis is 'producing a report', this is the last opportunity for the researcher to conceptualise the analysis through the addition of related literature.

Prior to analysis, audio recordings of the participants' responses were transcribed using transcription software. These initial transcriptions were then manually reviewed by two researchers who listened to each recording and amended the transcriptions where required. The transcribed interviews were then uploaded into NVivo 12, which was utilised to manage, sort, and organise the data, allowing researchers to store, annotate and retrieve text, locate words, phrases and segments of data, prepare diagrams and extract quotes (Burnard et al., 2008).

The study adopted an inductive or "bottom-up" strategy to identify themes and patterns in the data, whereby the themes identified were linked and primarily influenced by the data rather than influenced by the research teams preconceived theoretical interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A list of “initial codes” was independently generated by three separate researchers, based on re-reading all of the interview transcripts independently in order to highlight reoccurring themes in the data. Throughout this phase, researchers were noting down emerging themes and sub-themes to discuss with the wider research team. The researchers then met and reviewed the initial codes they had developed, mutually agreeing upon a set of final themes and sub-themes that comprehensively and accurately captured both the research questions and the initial codes.

Two researchers then coded all transcripts against these themes and sub-themes, and the coded transcripts were reviewed to finalise and synthesise findings across these themes. To allow for assessment of inter-rater reliability, the two researchers double coded 10 interviews and independently extracted the primary themes and sub-themes. The percentage of agreeableness on each theme will be presented in the Results section.

Results

This research involved interviewing individuals who have fled from Police and their passengers, to identify and outline the motivations, circumstances and decision-making processes reported. Through a detailed thematic analysis of interview transcripts, 21 sub-themes pertaining to participants’ motivations, circumstances and decision-making processes were identified. The 21 sub-themes were organised into four groups according to the research questions, which are discussed in the following results section.

- Motivations for fleeing (eight sub-themes);
- Impacts of substance use (three sub-themes);
- Emotions (five sub-themes);
- Consequences/Punishment (four sub-themes);

The sub-themes are loosely grouped into factors of the Prototype Willingness Model. The first is risk prototype, highlighting an individual's perceptions of prototype similarity and favourability of those who would commonly engage in a chase. The second is attitudes and norms which affects an individual's behavioural intention to flee. The third section relates to behavioural willingness; these are motivations that increase an individual's willingness to flee. The fourth category is situational factors, this relates to environmental motivators that increase an individual's willingness to flee. Situational factors are not identified as a component of the Prototype Willingness Model.

Theme One: Motivations for Fleeing

This section explores the key themes that emerged from participants' reports of their motivations for fleeing, providing key insights into research question one. Under this theme, eight key motivations (sub-themes) were identified:

Risk Prototype

- Automatic/habit.
- Peer influences.

Attitudes and Norms

- Them versus Us.
- Anti-police attitudes.

Behavioural Willingness

- Fear of mistreatment.

Situational Factors

- Fleeing is worth the risk.
- Fleeing provides a good chance of getting away.
- Too far gone.

Participants often highlighted more than one motivation to flee from police. The sub-themes explored below should therefore not be considered as mutually exclusive, but should instead be viewed as a range of different factors that contribute to the overall decision to flee. The sub-eight themes are represented below in Table 2, with a cross indicating where a theme pertained to each participant. These themes can be understood in terms of the key motivations for fleeing identified by participants and are explained in detail below.

Table 2

Themes Identified by Participants Pertaining to Motivations for Fleeing

Participant ID	(1) Automatic/habit	(2) Peer influence	(3) Them Vs Us	(4) Anti-police attitudes	(5) Fear of mistreatment	(6) Worth the risk	(7) Good chance of getting away	(8) Too far gone
I1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
I2			X			X		X
I3								
I4	X					X	X	X
I5	X	X	X			X		X
I6						X		X
I7		X		X		X		X
I8	X					X		
I9		X		X	X			
I10								
I11						X	X	
I12	X	X	X	X	X	X		
I13	X	X			X	X		
I14			X					
I15	X					X		
I16				X		X	X	X
I17		X	X	X		X	X	
I18	X							
I19	X	X					X	
I20								
I21								
I22								
I23					X	X	X	X
I24								
I25								X
I26	X			X		X	X	X
I27		X				X	X	X
I28	X	X		X	X	X	X	
I29	X	X		X	X	X		X
I30								X
I31				X	X	X	X	X
I32				X	X	X		X
I33			X		X	X	X	
I34						X	X	X
I35			X	X	X	X		X
I36		X				X		X
I37	X					X	X	X
I38				X	X	X		X
I39	X		X	X		X		
I40		X		X		X	X	X
Total	15	13	10	15	11	28	15	21
%	37%	32%	25%	37%	27%	70%	37%	52%

Risk Prototype

Automatic/ Habit

Many participants (*n* = 16, 40%) reported that evading police wasn't a conscious decision, but a natural flight response. This type of response was more common in participants that identified as Pākehā (*n* = 9, 47%) or Pasifika (*n* = 3, 60%), compared to those who identified as Māori (*n* = 4, 25%). Many of the participants that mentioned having a habitual response to flee from police, also indicated that fleeing from police was common for them within a broader antisocial environment and lifestyle. This sub-theme had 98.5% agreeableness among coders.

*"Yeah I would think of the repercussion, but of course, at the time I'm not thinking about them in a practical way. I'm thinking "f**k this, I'll be in the sh**." And it's something about when you're brought up in that way, you don't want things being taken from you. Especially a car from the police."*

*"It was just natural for me like I saw the lights and thought "f**k boom"... It's like a habit you get, especially being from Auckland because it is like the capital of high speeds."*

Other participants indicated that their decision to flee was based on an instantaneous calculation of their environment, surroundings, and whether they thought police had identified them or not.

"My instant reaction was "I know I've been caught speeding". I knew how fast I was going and I made a split-second decision at that point that I thought that could get

away because I had enough distance between myself in the patrol car that I didn't think he'd see my number plate, and I thought I had a chance, so I tried it. "

Peer Influences

Participants (*n* = 15, 38%) mentioned peer pressure or peer involvement as a motivator for fleeing from police. This theme was mentioned consistently across ages and ethnicities. Some participants indicated that they engaged in anti-social activities because of the environment and peers around them, and that these activities often resulted in police pursuits. Anti-social activities such as stealing cars for "joy rides" or "gas runs" (stealing petrol with a stolen car) were more commonly reported by younger participants, whereas the older participants commonly reported buying or transporting drugs with others. This sub-theme had 98.3% agreeableness among researchers.

"Cos I was like dropped out of school at the time and I had nothing to do and yeah, I just started thinking about stealing cars and stuff. And then I met a few people who did it, then started doing it."

Participants also mentioned the reinforcement that their peers in the car provided. The reinforcement provided by peers was either not wanting to let their peers down by pulling over for police, or gaining credibility from their peers by engaging in a police pursuit.

"That's like, probably it's worse [being in a chase alone]. Because there's no people cheering you on to like go faster."

"It was the cool thing to do at that point in time. To look cool in front of the girls."

Participants suggested that their peers also provided them with directions and advice during a police pursuit (*n* = 10, 25%). Some individuals indicated that the presence of their peers increased their confidence in being able to successfully flee from police, as well as decreasing their fear and panic as their peers were there to advise and help with decision making.

"So when you're in a car … with your mates, they kind of give you advice on what to do. You're not … having to make all the decisions yourself."

Participants reported that stories of police chases were shared via word of mouth and videos amongst youth residences, prisons, and wider peer groups that were engaging in similar activities. It was common for younger participants to report trying to gain a "better story" or reputation during a police chase by driving more dangerously or gaining more police attention whilst in a pursuit. That said, participants indicated that hearing about previous police chases did not motivate them to get into a chase, it just had influence on their behaviour during the chase.

*"Yeah, like who can do the longest, who can get the most attention, who can drive on the opposite side of the road the longest. S**t like that."*

"When you hear a story of someone [who] got away from seven [police] cars at night … then you're like, "you know what, I'll get eight cop cars. And then I'll do two more." It's real dumb like you're young, you think those sorts of things are cool."

Attitudes and Norms

Them versus Us

Some participants (*n* = 10, 25%) reported having a “Them versus Us” mentality when being signalled by police. Participants explained that they viewed the police as being different to them, and therefore against them. Participants also reported feeling harassed and treated unfairly in the past by police. This sub-theme had 97.4% agreeableness among researchers.

“I wouldn't go so far as to say a bit of a game but it wasn't taken with the seriousness that it should have been. It became a real combative us versus them. And I think it actually all started with frustration at the police and their attitude towards what we were doing when we weren't actually doing anything wrong.”

This sub-theme was more commonly reported by participants aged over 40 (*n* = 3, 100%) than participants in lower age brackets (proportions ranged from 0% to 23%), and was relatively consistent across ethnicities.

Some participants indicated that fleeing from the police was like engaging in a game. Some participants acknolowledges the negative emotions as worth it for the sense of accomplishment for successfully evading police.

"So, um, yeah I just thought "fuck this" so I took off, and I know the area quite well and knew that I couldn't go straight to the house I wanted to, it would be obvious and at that point, you've got fear, you've got paranoia going on inside you, but its kind of like a game of cat and mouse and once you think you've actually succeeded it's quite empowering in a sense."

As a result of the "Them versus Us" mentality, participants mentioned that successfully fleeing from police gave them a sense of power and a "one-up" over police. Although participants suggested that these feelings were not a primary motivator, they would likely increase the individuals' willingness to flee from police.

"...how would I describe it? I don't know, just getting one up on them all the time. Wouldn't necessarily go so far as to say we did it for fun, but it was definitely satisfying when you could do that."

Anti- Police Attitudes

Many participants (*n* = 15, 38%) reported having anti-police thoughts as a result of a wider pattern of anti-police attitudes. These anti-police attitudes increased individuals' intention and willingness to flee from police as a result of their distrust of police. These anti-police attitudes were more commonly reported by participants who identified as Māori (*n* = 9, 56%) or Pasifika (*n* = 3, 60%) than those who identified as Pākehā (*n* = 3, 16%). This theme had 98% agreeableness among researchers.

[Interviewer: why would you not stop for police?] "I don't know. I just hate the cops to be honest."

*"So there was no reason for it, they had their lights on ... It was a combination of me going, "oh f**k this, not again" ... and [the passengers] the same thing, "Oh nah, f**k those guys." And then I'm like, "Yep, right, f**k those guys" and off we went."*

As a result of these anti-police attitudes, some participants reported adopting policies or principles to never stop for police when signalled.

"I have one good mate [and] we have a little bit of a thing we used to say like 'non-stop policies'."

Participants explained that these anti-police attitudes manifested from an overall lack of respect for police. This lack of respect made evading police a viable option.

"I don't know the people's situations but if people had respect for the police then they wouldn't do those things."

*"It became like a borderline harassment thing. Like you actually felt like you couldn't actually leave your driveway without there being a problem, and if there was a problem you just need to get the f**k out of there. That's kind of how it became. And that goes right into the respect that we should have had for them."*

Participants explained that their lack of respect for police and willingness to engage in a pursuit was heavily influenced by the way in which police conducted themselves during a chase.

*"Nah we were just like "f**k those c***s were trying to kill us" and it just made us not want to pull over, because like why would they go on for 20mins."*

Another common response from participants indicated that their anti-police attitudes manifested from not understanding why police wanted to pull them over. This

led to a feeling that they did not need to pull over for police, as they weren't doing anything wrong.

*"...we started getting chased by cops. And so there was no reason for it, they had their lights on and we're like "no we're not about that today" we don't want any drama, it was actually just like a "Nah this is actually just bulls**t"*

Behavioural Willingness

Fear of Mistreatment

Many participants (*n* = 11, 30%) indicated that their fear of mistreatment by police if they were caught increased their willingness to evade apprehension. Participants who identified as Māori (*n* = 6, 38%) or Pasifika (*n* = 2, 40%) more commonly reported fear of mistreatment as a motivator, compared to those participants who identified as Pākehā (*n* = 3, 16%). This motivation was also more commonly reported by younger participants under the age of 20 (*n* = 8, 36%). Participants' fears of mistreatment included being physically or verbally abused by the officers chasing them. These fears were developed either through previous experiences with police, or through stories they had heard from family members or friends. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

"Most of the time? I was scared I was going to get a hiding from the cops."

"when they arrest us, they strangle our necks and throw us onto the car and based on one of the cops grabbed my head and hit it on the concrete and made my head

*bleed. They treat you like sh*t.…yeah it makes me feel, like I just can't trust any police now."*

Some participants explained that they have had mixed experiences with different police officers. However, the risk of having a negative experience with a police officer outweighs the chance that they will have a positive experience, increasing their willingness to evade police.

*"Yeah even when you get arrested, you have a good cop who's going to put the handcuffs on nice who's going to treat you with respect. And we have the other cop who is arrogant and will treat you like sh*t and it's just going to be bad the whole f**king way. It's not worth taking the chance."*

Being bitten by police dogs was also a common fear reported by participants, and was highlighted as a factor decreasing willingness to abandon the car and continue evading on foot.

"If I see a dog car, then I won't run. But if I don't see a dog car then I will jump out and run."

*"Nah I wouldn't be scared of police but police dogs, holy sh*t... they are scary."*

Situational Factors

Fleeing Is Worth The Risk

One of the most common themes that emerged (n = 30, 75%) throughout the interviews were individuals indicating that their decision to flee from police was influenced by their participation in other illegal activity. Participants indicated that

fleeing from police was “worth the risk” as it gave them an opportunity to avoid punishment for these activities, serving as a primary motivator for their decision to flee from Police. Table 3 below illustrates a breakdown of the illegal activity participants reported being engaged in at the time of their fleeing driver incident. Some individuals were engaged in multiple illegal activities at the time, therefore they might be counted across multiple categories. This theme had 97.2% agreeableness among researcher

Table 3

Number of Participants who Reported being Involved in Illegal Activity, by Activity Type

	In a stolen car	Warrant for arrest	Breach bail/parol conditions	License restrictions	Possession of drugs	Possession other contraband	Total participants (*n*)
Ethnicity							
Māori	12	4	2	5	3	2	16
Pasifika	5	4	1	1	0	1	5
Pākehā	5	4	1	11	5	3	19
Age							
Under 20	15	6	3	10	2	2	22
20 - 24	2	1	0	1	0	0	2
25 - 39	5	5	1	4	4	2	13
40 +	0	0	0	2	2	2	3

It was common for younger fleeing drivers and those who identified as Māori to be in a stolen vehicle, whereas it was more common for younger fleeing drivers and those who identified as Pākehā to be breaching license restrictions. Additionally, it was common among older fleeing drivers to be in possession of drugs or other contraband. Ninety four percent (*n*=15) of participants who identified as Māori, 80% (*n*= 4) of participants who identified as Pasifika, and 58% (*n*=11) of participants who identified as Pākehā, reported feeling that fleeing from the police was "worth the risk" to avoid punishment for other illegal activities. Participants explained that if they were to pull over when signalled, their illegal conduct would be discovered.

"I'd be searched, I think I'd be arrested, I'd get the car impounded, then the car could be searched, I wouldn't be able to get the car back for like 28 days."

"Cause if I run and get away then I don't get charged. It's like the risk. Get away with it, or if I don't I'll get charged"

Some participants reported that their decision to flee from police was a default response to avoid criminal sanction, acknowledging that the thought of avoiding capture and consequences acted as a prominent motivator to flee. Most commonly, participants reported avoiding prison time and losing their license or car as influencing their decision to flee.

"An instant choice, you know. Like, look my life is sort of ruined either way. So I made the choice to run from the police officer."

"I don't even try and think about it. Just keep in the back of my head that I am going to lose my license, so that is as bad as it gets. So that's about it."

Some participants reported that the potential for punishment for failing to stop would not worsen the charges they were facing for the other illegal activities if they were caught. Therefore, their decision to flee was influenced by the opportunity to evade these consequences, with minimal supplementary costs if they were apprehended.

"It's more I don't want to get caught. Like, I feel as if the punishment will be the same. Yeah, attempting to get away is a better option."

"Because usually if I'm in the car we're going to get arrested and I don't really care about the extra charges."

In addition, many participants explained that they would never intentionally get into a chase. Further highlighting that their engagement in a pursuit is a by-product of their pro-criminal environment.

*"I don't intentionally do it, I don't intentionally try to get in a chase. I'll drive around normally [but] as soon as I've seen a [police car] I think f**k that, I'm off."*

Fleeing Provides a Good Chance of Getting Away

Perhaps supporting the idea that fleeing police was "worth the risk", individuals reported believing that they had a good chance of actually getting away from police.

These beliefs were commonly held by individuals (n = 15, 38%) who themselves or someone they knew had successfully evaded police previously. This theme had 97.3% agreeableness among researchers.

"I've been in a chase once before when I was 13 and I thought it was all good because we didn't crash or get caught or nothing. So I thought it would be all good to do it again."

"I thought that I could get away because I had enough distance between myself in the patrol car that I didn't think he'd see my number plate. And I thought I had a chance so I tried it."

Additionally, some participants indicated the reason they thought they had a good chance of getting away was due to their ability to drive a car well.

"...like give me a fast enough vehicle and I will get away because I've been doing it since I was ten. It was like that in that situation, if I didn't think I could have done it [successfully evaded], I wouldn't have done it."

Further, participants explained that they had confidence in the speed or calibre of their vehicle in order to successfully evade police.

"No, I was pretty confident because we were in a pretty fast car. I was actually relatively confident of that. [successfully evading]"

Too Far Gone

In addition to the two sub-themes addressed above, some participants (*n* =23, 58%) reported feeling that they were "too far gone" when seeing police, that they felt that stopping when signalled was not an option. Eighty one percent (*n* = 13) of participants who identified as Māori, 60% (*n* = 3) of participants who identified as Pasifika, and 37% (*n* =7) of participants who identified as Pākehā reported feeling "too far gone". Participants indicated that when they were signalled by police they felt as though they were already in a large amount of trouble, therefore their decision to flee was an automatic reaction and a salient option. This theme had 97.5% agreeableness among researchers.

*"I just wanted [the driver] to keep going. I was like f**k, if I get caught now I'm done. I was like, if we keep going I don't need to worry about being caught."*

Some participants explained they couldn't stop for police as they didn't want to face the consequences for how they were driving.

"I was travelling probably about 140 k's an hour. And I went past an off duty cop about twenty minutes out of [town] and they radioed ahead and I sort of figured that they had done that. And as I came into [town] there was about four or five cops sitting there waiting and I just straight away thought "I'm off, I can't stop."

Other participants highlighted that their decision to flee from police was influenced by the amount and type of drugs they were in possession of. The threat of punishment for possession of drugs gave them the feeling that they were "too far gone".

*"Because you all know what charges having methamphetamine has on us ut being in a police chase I just thought "f**k it".. That was the only feeling I had was that I had to get the f**k out of there".*

In addition, participants explained that once they had made the decision to engage in a chase there was no way that they could stop for police.

"...once you start running, there's no stopping unless the car breaks down or you run out of gas, or you crash the car."

Theme Two: Impacts of Substance Use

One of the most common themes identified throughout the interviews was the use of substances. Many participants indicated that they were either under the influence of a substance, or were in possession of illegal substances when being signalled by police. Three key sub-themes emerged pertaining to the impacts of substance use, providing key insights into research question two, and are identified below as situational factors that can increase an individual's behavioural willingness and bahvioural intention to flee from police.

Situational Factors

- Wouldn't Have Happened Sober
- Impaired Driving

- No Fear

The three themes are represented below in Table 4, with a cross indicating where a theme pertained to each participant. These themes can be understood in terms of the key impacts of substance use identified by participants and are explained in detail below.

Table 4

Themes Identified by Participants Pertaining to Substance Use

Participant ID	(1) Wouldn't have happened Sober	(2) Impaired Driving	(3) No Fear
I1			
I2	X	X	X
I3			
I4			
I5		X	
I6	X		X
I7	X		
I8	X		X
I9	X		
I10			
I11	X	X	
I12			
I13			
I14			
I15			
I16	X		X
I17	X	X	
I18			
I19			
I20			
I21	X		
I22			
I23	X	X	X
I24			
I25			
I26	X		X
I27		X	
I28			
I29			
I30	X		
I31	X		X
I32	X	X	X
I33			
I34			
I35		X	
I36		X	X
I37		X	
I38	X	X	
I39			X
I40	X	X	
Total	16	12	10
%	40%	30%	25%

Situational Factors

Wouldn't Have Happened Sober

Many participants (*n* = 18, 45%) indicated that being under the influence of a substance increased their willingness to evade police when signalled. Participants reported that their decision-making was impaired whilst under the influence, therefore affecting their ability to make rational choices. Participants also suggested that they were more likely to flee from police if they had substances in their vehicle, as they didn't want to get caught with possession of illicit substances. Of these participants, eleven reported being drunk. This theme had 99.3% agreeableness among researchers.

"The lights were behind me, and I was thinking, "should I pull over?". Then I thought, "Nah I'm not going to pull over, I am way too drunk""

In addition, participants explained that being both under the influence and being in possession of methamphetamine increased their behavioural willingness to flee. Seven reported using meth.

"All three of them I was on meth. I feel that when I was high it made me not think too far ahead of the consequences of doing that, we just needed to get away. Especially when you're high, people around you are all so high and they have drugs on them. We wanted to get away because we had drugs on us."

Participants indicated that being under the influence of cannabis made them feel that successfully evading the police was inevitable. Five participants reported using cannabis in the lead-up to the pursuit.

"At the time, before the high speed, I was feeling like we weren't even gonna get caught. But it was because I was under the influence of weed, I had really stupid thinking."

Impaired Driving

Participants (*n* = 14, 35%) indicated that being under the influence of a substance negatively impacted on their driving whilst in a police pursuit. This sub-theme was more commonly reported by participants who identified as Māori (*n* = 8, 50%) than those who identified as Pasifika or Pākehā and was also more prominent among participants under age 20 (*n* = 9, 41%) and over age 40 (*n* = 2, 67%). This theme had 99.3% agreeableness among researchers.

Some participants acknowledged the different ways in which individual substances impaired their driving, leading to more dangerous driving and impaired decision-making.

"Even the road code tells you that you know, driving affects your concentration and perceptions and that. But like, with meth, you're a little bit more easy. Like you play music real loud and like you might go into the curve, may go through a house or something you know. But like with alcohol it's kind of like [out of it] because like the drugs were made for different highs, you know? Yeah, just weird that it affects your driving, you know?"

No Fear

Another common substance use sub-theme reported by participants (*n*=10, 25%) whilst being under the influence during a police chase was the inability to recognise the danger of the situation they were in. Participants indicated that being under the influence during a police chase increased their willingness to flee as they were less worried about being caught, being injured, or even being killed. This theme had 99.3% agreeableness among researchers.

*"In the car, the girls were saying, "We're going to die". That just adds to the s**t pile, you know. Like that's enough to tip you over, like if we're going to die it might as well be in a ball of flames. But I wasn't concerned about anyone else's safety and that is because I was so drunk. Like, now I would be concerned."*

In addition, other participants explained that being under the influence created a lack of self-worth, and therefore a disregard for their safety.

*"Look you know, when you're high as f**k on the drugs … there's no self-worth and any love for yourself. You have sort of a disregard for your own life really."*

Theme Three: Emotions

Five major emotions that were consistently reported by participants when asked about what they were feeling before, during, and after the police pursuit, providing key insights into research question three. These emotions are reported as sub-themes below:

Situational factors

- Panic
- Fear
- Adrenaline/thrill
- Positive emotions
- Regret

The five sub-themes are represented below in Table 5, with a cross indicating where a theme pertained to each participant. These themes can be understood in terms of the key emotions experienced and identified by participants before, during, and after a fleeing driver event and are explained in detail below. These themes have been categorised as situational factors, as participants explained the emotions did not act as motivators for fleeing, but were by-products or situational factors of the chase as some may act as reinforces (e.g. positive emotions, adrenaline) and therefore affected their behavioural willingness and behavioural intention to flee from police.

Table 5

Themes Identified by Participants Pertaining to Emotions

Participant ID	(1) Panic	(2) Fear of Crashing or Injury	(2.1) Fear of being Caught	(2.2) Fear of Punishment and Consequences	(3) Adrenaline and Thrill	(4) Positive Emotions	(5) Regret
I1	X	X	X	X			
I2	X						X
I3							
I4	X			X			
I5	X				X	X	
I6	X	X		X	X		X
I7	X						
I8	X		X		X	X	X
I9		X	X	X		X	X
I10			X	X			
I11	X				X	X	
I12					X		X
I13				X			
I14	X						X
I15			X	X			
I16					X	X	
I17					X		X
I18					X	X	
I19	X	X				X	X
I20	X				X		
I21				X	X		
I22							
I23	X	X		X	X		X
I24							
I25	X			X			
I26				X			
I27		X		X	X	X	X
I28		X					
I29		X	X				X
I30	X			X		X	X
I31			X	X	X	X	X
I32		X	X	X	X	X	
I33				X	X	X	
I34				X	X		
I35					X	X	
I36				X			
I37			X	X	X		
I38	X		X	X	X	X	X
I39					X	X	
I40		X			X		X
Total	15	10	10	20	21	15	15
%	37%	25%	25%	50%	52%	37%	37%

Situational Factors

Panic

Many participants (n = 16, 40%) reported feeling a sense of panic when they were signalled by police to pull over. Panic was consistently reported across ethnicities, but participants under the age of 20 (n = 5, 23%) were less likely to talk about this than participants in other age groups. This theme had 95.7% agreeableness among researchers.

Participants reported increased levels of panic if they were breaching their license conditions.

*"My mate was on his phone, he was on his restricted and he didn't have his seat belt on. So I pointed the cop out to him and he was like, "Oh sh*t" and started freaking out."*

Participants also reported experiencing the feeling of panic if they were breaching parole conditions.

"Well it was pretty scary, it was like my first time and I was on my conditions, already going up to court."

Further, participants reported increased levels of panic if they were in possession of illegal contraband (substances, or guns).

"Basically the main neurotransmitter was adrenaline I wasn't really thinking there was a lot of panic going through my head. I didn't want to get caught with weed on me"

In addition, participants explained that the feeling of panic only set in in the middle of the chase and had an impact on their perceived driving ability.

"I felt completely in control at the start of the chase, then I started to panic and lost control."

Fear

Another sub-theme reported by participants was feeling afraid of potential outcomes of the pursuit, such as, the fear of injury or crashing (n = 12, 30%). Being afraid of crashing was commonly reported by passengers, however, drivers also mentioned that they were afraid of crashing when they increased their speed to successfully evade police. Participants who reported being the driver in a pursuit indicated the fear of crashing did not deter from attemptig to evade police. Being afraid of crashing or being injured was more common among participants who identified as Māori (n = 7, 44%) compared with participants who identified as Pasifika or Pākehā (both around 20%), but was relatively consistent across ages.

"I remember saying to everyone in the car, "We're dying tonight". No point in putting your seat belt on, I was so deep in it aye."

"So you're scared, not just about the cops and going to jail, you're scared about seriously hurting yourself."

Participants, more notebly passengers, reported that hearing of people dying, during or after police pursuits. Where participants were able to relate to their situation this made them less likely to flee from police. This sub-theme had 99% agreeableness among researchers.

"You learn from your mistakes. And what I mean by that, it's like some of my friends won't even jump in the car because their older brothers died from high speeds. One of my friends died, another one of my friends has died. I am on a road to learning about that stuff."

"I have friends that crashed and they got really badly injured. And seeing that, this is definitely going to stop me from stealing cars now."

Participants reported that their fear increased when thinking about being caught (*n* = 10, 25%), and/or the fear of punishment if they were caught (*n* = 22, 55%). Some participants spoke about the fear of specific punishment, such as of returning to prison or losing custody of their children. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

*"F**k I was just scared. I wasn't scared of police, it was more about going back to jail for me. The police don't scare me. I just hate spending long terms behind bars. Because I have done a few now since I was young."*

"I was scared that I would get in trouble. I thought that I would lose my kids or that I would go to jail."

In addition, participants indicated that fear of police was a common motivator to flee among their wider circles.

"I was scared of the cops. I was scared of the police. Wow, there's like so many times when the cops will smash you. Like if they catch you. That's what most of us boys are scared of, just a hiding from the cops. "

Upon reflection, some participants reported being conscious of the safety of the general public and bystanders during a chase. This realisation often only occurred after the chase, as participants did not typically recall being worried about the safety of others during the pursuit. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

"The thing I was more worried about was if we crashed and someone died or we crashed into a car that had kids in it and hurt them. I still have nightmares about it, like crashing into people and that. It's scary because if you and I were in that and you lose control and that, there's nothing you can do because you can't stop your car from rolling."

"I didn't think I was gonna get caught. Which is some A-grade arrogance and disregard for other people, which I recognise now. It's where I was at in the moment, you know."

Adrenaline/ Thrill

One of the most common emotion sub-themes reported by participants was the feeling of adrenaline or thrill during a fleeing driver incident (n= 22, 55%). This sub-

theme was consistent among ethnicities, but was, more common among participants under the age of 20 (*n* = 14, 64%) and less common among participants over the age of 40 (*n* = 1, 33%). This theme had 98.4% agreeableness among researchers.

Some participants reported experiencing adrenaline as a by-product of a police pursuit, rather than a motivator to attempt to evade from police.

*"Like your adrenaline spikes up. That's what my adrenaline is like, triggered on … police chases and stealing cars and s**t."*

Conversely, some participants explained that the experience of adrenaline made them more focused and increased their willingness to flee.

"That adrenaline and the whole tunnel vision. There is nothing else that matters but getting away."

Many participants indicated that the experience of adrenaline during a chase was negative, associating the experience with fear and panic.

"It was all adrenaline, "oh shit, go that way, oh no oh no" [that people were saying]. Can't remember anything specific, just scared."

However, when participants spoke about adrenaline after the pursuit it was more positive and related to relief and excitement.

"[I was] just pumped with adrenaline with a hint of fear, you know. I was pretty cooked."

"Well, you just get an adrenaline rush pretty much. It's kind of fun, kind of scary sometimes."

"Yeah, I would say my emotions were probably surprised from [getting away]. That was quite a new move. Like I said, it was the first time and only time. It was like, maybe if I'm honest, like exhilarating really."

Positive Emotions

Positive thoughts or emotions were also mentioned by participants (n = 16, 40%) as a result of the chase. It was more common for participants who identified as Pasifika (n = 4, 80%) to report positive emotion or feelings in relation to the fleeing driver event compared to participants that identified as Pākehā or Māori (around 30% each). There was relatively no difference across age groups. This theme had 90% agreeableness among researchers.

Participants reported feeling positive emotions after the chase had ended. It was common for participants who had successfully evaded police to feel increased levels of power and satisfaction.

*"I'd say it was definitely more of an adrenaline kick but I wouldn't go so far as to say it was thrilling. It wasn't like, "F**k yeah, this is awesome!" it was just like, "f**k the police." So the satisfaction was a relief ... it was like, "Thank god."*

"It wasn't anything new to us, it was more trying to give the people that we were giving a ride a good feeling."

Some participants explained that this positive emotion was only momentary as the thought of getting caught after dominated.

"The times that we do get away it made me feel pretty good, but at the same time, it's not good. If the cops see your face and recognise you they will just come and raid you later."

Regret

Upon reflection, many participants (*n*= 17, 43%) reported experiencing a sense of regret following the fleeing driver event. It was more common for participants who identified as Māori (*n* = 9, 56%) or Pasifika (*n* = 3, 60%) to report feeling regret, compared to those who identified as Pākehā (*n* = 5, 26%). There was relatively no difference across age groups. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

Participants reported feeling regretful for many different reasons. For many participants, it was the realisation of the risks involved in a police pursuit, including killing a bystander, getting caught, and being killed.

"I regretted that whole thing straight away. I just, imagine if like you know, a kid got hit. Or we ran someone over or something. I would never forget it."

Participants reported feeling "stupid" for being involved in a fleeing driver incident. This feeling resulted in them being surprised at themselves for getting in a pursuit and worring about consequences.

*"I mean afterwards when we got out of the car, we looked at each other and we were like, "Bro we are f**ked, you know, we're pretty much f**ked". And I mean, the adrenaline was still there so we were sort of just taking in what happened and sort of had a laugh about it, but at the same time, not like a funny, that was fun. It was kind of the laugh that is like "we are f**ked."*

It was common among participants who had been in a chase, or knew of someone in a pursuit resulting in a death to report feeling regretful.

"I would probably tell them not to do it, not to encourage them to do it. Because yeah, five people are dead now and they were all youth when they died."

In addition, some participants explained that their feeling of regret has motivated them to adopt a more pro-social way of living.

"Before I got out, I had to study to do the road code again, and now everywhere I go I'm thinking "oh yep, this is how I drive, this is how I am" My car's warranted, my car's registered."

Theme Four: Consequences/ Punishment

The final emerging theme reported by participants related to the perceived consequences of being in a pursuit, providing key insights into research question four. From this theme, four sub-themes emerged:

Risk Prototype

- *Likelihood of getting caught*
- *Pleading Ignorance*
- *Techniques to Get Away*

Attitudes and Norms

- *No Fear of Consequences*

The four sub-themes are represented below in Table 6, with a cross indicating where a theme pertained to each participant. These themes can be understood in terms of the key ideas around the consequences and punishments of fleeing from the police identified by participants are explained in detail below. These themes have been categorised into either a risk prototype highlighting prototype favourability or similarity as contributing to the participant's predisposition to flee. The other category is behavioural willingness, highlighting factors that motivate participants to flee.

Table 6

Themes Identified by Participants Pertaining to Consequences and Punishment

Participant ID	(1) Likelihood of getting caught (previous experience)	(1.1) Know the area	(1.2) Caught after	(1.3) Driving dangerously	(2) Pleading ignorance	(3) Techniques to getting away	(3.2) Speeding	(3.3) Turning off headlights	(3.4) Swapping Drivers	(4) No fear of consequences
I1		X			X			X		X
I2										
I3										
I4							X			
I5	X	X								
I6						X	X			
I7					X	X				
I8		X								
I9				X						
I10										
I11	X	X			X	X				
I12		X		X			X			X
I13	X	X			X	X				
I14										
I15		X			X	X	X			
I16			X			X				X
I17	X	X				X		X		
I18		X			X					X
I19	X									X
I20					X					X
I21									X	
I22										
I23	X		X			X	X			
I24						X				
I25	X						X			
I26				X		X	X			
I27	X					X	X			X
I28							X			
I29	X					X				X
I30	X		X			X	X		X	
I31	X		X	X		X	X			X
I32	X			X		X			X	
I33										
I34			X	X		X	X			
I35			X	X		X	X			
I36				X						
I37				X		X				
I38			X	X		X		X	X	X
I39	X			X		X				
I40	X				X	X	X		X	X
Total	14	9	7	11	8	21	14	3	5	11
%	35%	22%	17%	27%	20%	52%	35%	7.5%	12%	27%

Risk Prototype

Likelihood of Getting Caught

Participants reported different factors that contributed to the likelihood of them successfully evading police. This included being in a fast car, being in a known area, and travelling at certain times of the day. Some participants indicated that it was easier to evade police during the night when there is less traffic, however, others indicated it was easier to get away during the day as police were less likely to engage in a pursuit or call the chase off when others were around. This theme had 96% agreeableness among researchers.

"Most of the chases have been in [region] where I live, so I have known the area pretty well. I had one in [a city I didn't know] but I just kept to the main roads."

*"[The chance of getting away was] 50/50. I knew since I was in the s**t car, I was going to crash and the motor had f**ked out because it just kept tapping on 100."*

Some participants (n = 15, 38%) reported that they felt confident in their ability to successfully evade police if they had done so previously. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

"I know how to drive … If I'm getting away, I'm getting away and the only times I've been caught is when I've crashed."

As explained above, many participants reported feeling a sense of relief after successfully evading police. However, some participants (*n* = 7, 18%) reported being caught hours or even days after the event, most commonly through license plates, camera footage, or being recognised by a witness or a police officer. Some participants reported that they would discontinue fleeing if the police officer got too close to see who they were, or see their license plates. Others reported only using a stolen car to flee so that the police would be unable to identify them via their license plates. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

"Well, the last time actually I thought I'd got away. I thought they had abandoned the pursuit, then I pulled into someone's address that I knew and the next minute they all turned up there."

Pleading Ignorance

Some participants (*n* = 9, 23%) reported that if caught when fleeing from police they could avoid the consequences by "pleading ignorance", either by stating they weren't aware they were being signalled, or that they were not the person who had fled. This theme had 100% agreeableness among researchers.

"But then they came. I was hoping it wasn't for me but it was. And then when they were behind me, I thought I'd just go 50km … to pretend I wasn't trying to get away. And then I just kept trying to go down different streets. But it didn't last that long, because obviously, they're going faster than me. So, I didn't want to speed … like try and show that I was getting away."

Some participants reported believing that police weren't able to charge you with failure to stop after the fleeing driver event had occurred, as they wouldn't be able to prove who was driving the car at the time.

"Well, I've never been charged for fleeing, because the cops would have to prove that you actually saw them, you know? And there's only so much stuff that they want to argue in court, of course."

Based on the belief above, some participants reported only stopping for police once they believed that police had sighted who was driving and therefore had sufficient evidence to successfully pursue fleeing driver charges.

"And if [the police] say "why did you take off?" [I'd say] "Oh, I didn't even see your lights" kind of thing. Just ignorance. It's total ignorance."

Techniques to Get Away

One of the most common themes that emerged from the data was the use of techniques to successfully evade police (n = 23, 56%). Many participants indicated that they were confident in their ability to get away from police with the use of these techniques. This theme had 91.6% agreeableness among researchers.

"I have a strategy about getting away. The strategy is about turning corners and stuff like that to get away from them because it slows them up."

As mentioned above, many participants were partaking in illegal activity prior to being signalled by police. With this in mind, participants indicated that they had a set plan on how to get away if they were to be signalled by police. Participants also reported that their passengers were useful in advising them how to get away.

"Well, usually all my mates would be listening to the scanner anyway. And someone would ring me during the police chase and give me pointers on where to go and where they're looking and if they've identified me and whatnot."

Some participants (*n* = 15, 38%), indicated that one of their first strategic moves was to increase their speed. This would give them the advantage of gaining more space between them and the police vehicle, providing them with an opportunity to move out of police sight.

"You just drive as fast as you can, and yeah that's pretty much it."

Another technique reported by participants to incite police to abandon the pursuit was turning off headlights (*n* = 3, 7.5%).

"So I turned my lights off, they stop chasing because it's too dangerous. It's reckless driving."

A reasonably common technique reported by participants (*n* = 6, 15%) was swapping drivers. This technique would be adopted for many reasons, such as swapping with a more skilled driver, swapping with someone who had a full license, or swapping because the original driver was tired or panicking. One of the main reasons

that participants reported swapping drivers was in response to the potential consequences the original driver would face if caught, due to their age or criminal history.

"She [the driver] just couldn't [keep going], she was folding I guess. You know, when you have the police behind you it's a lot of pressure, you're not thinking straight, we were drunk as well."

"He was driving first and I swapped seats with him ... Because he was older than me and cos I didn't want him to go to jail."

"So he jumped out to distract the cops. My cousin then was going to jump in the passenger's [seat], and I was gonna jump in the driver's [seat] so they didn't get a serious charge."

Many participants (n = 11, 28%) reported believing that creating enough danger (eg., by driving erratically) would effectively bring the pursuit to an end. For example, some participants indicated that police 'had to' abandon the pursuit if the driver went onto the other side of the road. This was particularly common among younger participants aged under 20 (n = 8, 36%) or between the ages of 20 – 24 (n = 1, 50%), and for participants who identified as Māori (n = 7, 44%) or Pasifika (n = 3, 60%) compared to those who identified as Pākehā (n = 1, 5%).

"I was just driving on the wrong side of the road ... because the police have to pull off."

"Well, it's just dangerous driving. I mean, if you're in a 50km area in the [central business district] or a civilian area and you're doing 100km, they're gonna abandon pursuit."

Participants reported that adopting the method of driving dangerously did not always prompt police to call the chase off, often resulting in their apprehension.

"As soon as you drive on the wrong side of the road [police] are meant to be pulling off. But at that time [when I got caught] they decided not to."

In addition, participants highlighted that utilising the time of day was an effective technique. Participants mentioned that police could not engage in a pursuit if there were too many bystanders creating pedestrian interference.

"I think that they get so far and if it's getting a bit dangerous, like the public, if it's during the day or something they won't chase you"

However, some participants indicated that they would avoid engaging in a pursuit whilst there were people around. Participants mentioned that bystanders could inform the police of the offender's location and route.

"Not so easy during the day with general public, and taxi's. Members of the public like to inform police of what is going on."

Attitudes and Norms

No Fear of Consequences

When participants were asked about what they thought the consequences were for fleeing from police (if caught), they either reported that they didn't know, or that the consequences for evading police were light compared to the consequences they would be facing for the other illegal activity they were taking part in at the time of the pursuit. This theme had 99% agreeableness among researchers.

Some participants (n = 11, 28%) indicated that as the consequences were so light in comparison to other potential more harsh punishment they would be facing for their congruent illegal activity, attempting to evade police was "worth the risk".

"I have had 11 or 12 police chases and I have gotten away the majority of the time. And in times I've been caught the cops have just done bugger all so it is worth it"

Younger participants indicated that the youth justice system had less serious consequences compared to the adult justice system, and that residential youth facilities were like "school camp".

"We were young and had nothing to lose. If we got caught we would just get put in the youth lock up so that was it. So it's really not much of a punishment for youth."

Discussion

Based on semi-structured interviews with 40 drivers and passengers who have fled from police in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study provides an in-depth qualitative examination of individual motivators and situational factors that these individuals report contribute to fleeing. Thematic analysis was adopted in the current study to gather a profile of the motivations influencing an individual's decision to flee from police in order to answer the research questions. The overall purpose of this research was to understand the context and motivations for fleeing, to further inform policy.

Participants provided detailed descriptions of their own experiences in fleeing driver incidents. Thematic analysis of the interviews identified four key themes commonly mentioned by participants giving insight into individual factors contributing to their decision to flee. The main objectives of this study were to identify the external and internal factors that contribute to drivers' decisions to flee from police, to examine whether cultural factors influence drivers' decisions to flee from police, and to determine the impacts of potential punishments or negative consequences on decisions to flee from police.

Fleeing Driver Motivations

Despite potential preconceived beliefs that a major motivation for individuals to engage in a fleeing driver event was to seek out thrill and excitement, findings from the current study indicated that one of the most common motivations influencing an individual's decision to flee was the desire to avoid punishment for other illegal activities that they were involved in at the time. Some of the key factors underpinning this motivation were the belief that fleeing provided a good chance of getting away

from police, and that the potential charges they faced for their concurrent illegal activities outweighed the consequences for evading police.

These findings are in line with those of Cherbonneau & Jacobs (2019), Dunham et al.,(1998), & the California Highway Patrol (1983) who conducted studies to investigate characteristics and motivations of individuals who fled from police, using samples of, individuals who had fled and been apprehended, officers' impressions of suspects' motivations for evading police, and individuals who had been apprehended for auto-theft. These studies also found that a key motivation for individuals who flee from police is to avoid criminal sanction for the illegal activity they were engaging in either before or during the event. These findings could be explained by those of Whichard & Felson (2016), who used a sample of 17,000 inmates to investigate reasons why they resisted arrest. Findings highlighted that non-compliance is influenced by three broad factors: loss-aversion, impairment, and defiance. In relation to the current finding only loss-aversion will be explored, however, the other two factors will be discussed in relation to other findings below.

At the core of loss-aversion is the idea that decision-makers would prefer to have a chance of not having to face any consequences than to face a definite and significant setback or consequence (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). Thus, loss-aversion is salient to deterrence theory as it is grounded in risk preference. Further, individuals will frame their choice options either positively or negatively. Positively framed options are illustrated when an individual seeks to lock in gains when they are faced with the possibility of losing what they have. In the case of fleeing drivers, positive framing would highlight that attempting to evade police allows offenders to maintain their freedom. Negatively framed choice options are illustrated when an individual seeks to avoid loss. In relation to the current study, negative framing would highlight

that attempting to flee from police allows offenders to avoid their deprivation of liberty for example losing things like drivers license, or bail and parole privileges. Risk framing highlights that individual weigh up the same scenarios different, based on whether they are trying to maintain a gain, or avoid loss (Whichard & Felson, 2016). These findings demonstrate that in the current study, participants' decisions to flee could be motivated by negative risk framing, as the desire to avoid punishment for other illegal activities that they were involved in at the time was highlighted as the most prevalent motivation.

Chance of Apprehension

Another important finding from the current study indicated that younger participants were more likely to report the belief that they could avoid apprehension whilst evading police. This was demonstrated through the use of techniques such as driving dangerously (including driving across the centerline), getting help from passengers, increasing their speed, turning off their headlights, and swapping drivers.

These findings are in line with those from Cherbonneau & Jacobs (2019). Using a sample of offenders apprehended for car theft, they found that offenders would adopt specific tactics to successfully evade police. These tactics included, having an accomplice to travel in a legitimate car whilst being in a stolen vehicle, increased speed, tactically taking side streets as motorways had a high police presence, creating a suitable level of danger on the roads to influence police to call off the chase, and finally, running on foot was used by offenders to evade if the pursuit was lasting too long. These findings are congruent with those from Arantes et al., (2013), who investigated whether criminal offenders discount future rewards faster than non-offenders. The results of this study suggest that offenders place greater weight on the immediate consequences compared to consequences delayed over time, indicating a

deficit in delay discounting (Arantes et al., 2013). This demonstrates that when being signalled to pull over by police, participants may lack the ability to weigh longer-term consequences of behaviour and overall influences their decision to flee. Mamayek et al., (2017) also highlighted the importance of celerity or swiftness of punishment on decision-making, indicating that there is a higher deterrent value in more immediate punishments.

In addition, the current study found that individuals who adopted techniques to evade police had often acquired such knowledge through either successfully evading police previously, or knowing someone who had successfully evaded. These results can be explained by Stafford & Warr's (1993) theory of punishment avoidance. Punishment avoidance is conceptualised as a situation in which a person commits a criminal offence, but avoids apprehension and punishment, and through the use of confirmation bias and observation selection, the chances of re-offending can increase. These findings highlight that the successful adoption of techniques to avoid apprehension and punishment can increase an individual's behavioural willingness to flee from police in the future.

Substance Use

Another finding of the current study highlighted the effects of substance use on an individual's decision to flee from police. Participants indicated that substance use was a situational factor that increased their willingness to flee from police, impaired their decision-making, and decreased the level of fear they experienced. These findings are congruent with those from Dunham et al., (1998), who found that individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs reported that they didn't want to face police, and that being under the influence made them drive more dangerously.

The understanding of the above findings can be expanded by the impairment factor in Whichard & Felson's (2016) conceptualisation of non-compliance mentioned above. The impairment factor explains that an individual's decision making can be impaired by a number of things, including alcohol and drug use, anger, mental instability, and emotional agitation. This is because impairment increases the likelihood that offenders will overvalue anticipated rewards, and undervalue or dismiss expected risks (Whichard & Felson, 2016). In relation to the current study, these findings highlight that being under the influence of drugs and alcohol may inhibit drivers capacity to reason, by impairing their decision making, and decreasing the amount of fear experienced; this was demonstrated with the sub-theme ‘wouldn’t have happened sober’, highlighting the role that substance use plays as a situational factor influencing drivers decision to flee.

Emotions

The current study indicated that younger participants were more likely to report feeling thrill and adrenaline whilst evading police. These findings are in line with those demonstrated by Homant et al (1998), indicating that younger participants have higher sensation-seeking tendencies and therefore are more likely to engage in behaviour that evokes adrenaline and thrill. Although the current study found an age difference in thrill and adrenaline, participants indicated that those feelings or emotions were not primary motivators for their decision to evade police; they were, however, often experienced as positive emotions that were a by-product of engaging in a fleeing driver incident. The current study found that when fleeing from police offender’s experienced panic, increased levels of fear, and regret.

Additionally, the current study found that when experiencing these emotions, particularly panic, offenders' driving ability was inhibited, causing them to make more erratic decisions whilst in the chase. Although these emotions were not motivators, they could have a significant effect on the nature of the fleeing driver event. For example, Dunham et al (1998), found that experiencing emotions such as fear and panic during a chase could increase an individual's behavioural willingness to engage in further risk-taking to successfully evade police. Overall, the findings suggest that emotions such as fear, panic, regret, and adrenaline could be identified as situational factors that increase an individual's behavioural willingness to successfully evade police.

Cultural Differences

Findings from the current study identified that although there were no motivations or themes that were exclusive to specific cultures or ethnicities, a cultural difference with regards to experience with police was identified; therefore, having an impact on Māori and Pasifika attitudes towards police. However, age was a potential confound, for example, younger participants were also likely to report negative attitudes towards police, and most of the participants who identified as Māori were young. Māori and Pasifika participants were more likely to report previous negative experiences with police and general anti-police attitudes as primary motivations for fleeing compared with Pakeha participants.

These findings relate to those from a study conducted by Brittain & Tuffin (2017) who interviewed five Māori adults about their experiences in the criminal justice system in order to provide an examination of Māori lived experiences. Four main themes were extracted from the data. The first theme identified was the experience of institutional racism, with participants reporting instances of physical abuse from

Corrections officers because they were Māori. The second theme that emerged from the data was Māori and Pākehā identities, with participants reporting feeling that within the criminal justice system, Māori identity was seen as inferior to Pākehā identity. The third theme that emerged from the study was Māori being trapped in the criminal justice system, with participants reporting feeling trapped in marginalisation, risk, and poor social environments, making them feel inevitably trapped in offending and imprisonment. The final theme was that there is strength within the Māori culture; participants stated that their connection with Māori culture fostered their resilience.

The above study indicates that Māori have different experiences with police that could influence an individual's decision to flee from police. This suggestion is supported by a study conducted by Goodrich et al (2014) evaluating a prevention programme designed to create positive interactions between police and youth in a non-law enforcement environment. The study found that those participants who reported negative past experiences with police ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .53$, $p < .001$) reported significantly more negative attitudes toward police compared to those participants who reported positive past experiences ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .49$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that negative previous experiences with police may influence the development of anti-police attitudes.

A review by Brown & Benedict (2002) was conducted to update and expand research on perceptions and attitudes towards police. The review found that the quality of experiences with police not only affect an individual's attitudes towards police, but has a vicarious influence, and strongly impacts their peers' and family members' attitudes towards police. In addition, the study found that negative attitudes towards police decrease compliance. Brown & Benedict (2002) highlighted the importance of perceived procedural justice, suggesting that in order to comply with police,

adolescents need to feel as though they are being treated fairly and with respect, these findings were more prominent for those from minority groups. Murphy (2015) stated that procedural justice relates to the perceived fairness of the procedures involved in decision-making and the perceived treatment one receives from the decision-maker. Tyler & Blader (2003) explain the group value model as a social psychological theory that underpins perceived procedural justice and highlights why it is effective in influencing individual's views of police and their willingness to co-operate with them. The group value model indicates that an individual's self-worth is largely impacted by group membership, and the way in which an individual evaluates their status within the group is how they are treated by important members of the group (such as police, with the "group" being wider NZ society). This treatment received from important group members is indicative of how much they are valued in the group, therefore, fair procedures imply respect and value, and unfair procedures imply disrespect and marginality. The group value model highlights that if members of the public view police as treating them in an unfair manner, then they will assume that police do not value them as an important member of the community. This is detrimental to the individual's sense of self-worth and sense of belonging within society, indicating that those who feel unfairly treated by police will be less likely to comply with police.

In addition, the finding from the current study relates to the final factor of non-compliance proposed by Whichard & Felson (2016) of defiance. Defiant offenders resist authority because they see the punishment or sanction of threats as unfair or unjust. This creates the belief among non-compliant offenders that their defiance is the correct thing to do. The above studies aid in illustrating findings from the current study by highlighting how negative experiences reported by Māori and Pasifika participants

may have facilitated the development of negative attitudes towards police, and therefore increased their willingness to flee from police.

Prototype Willingness Model

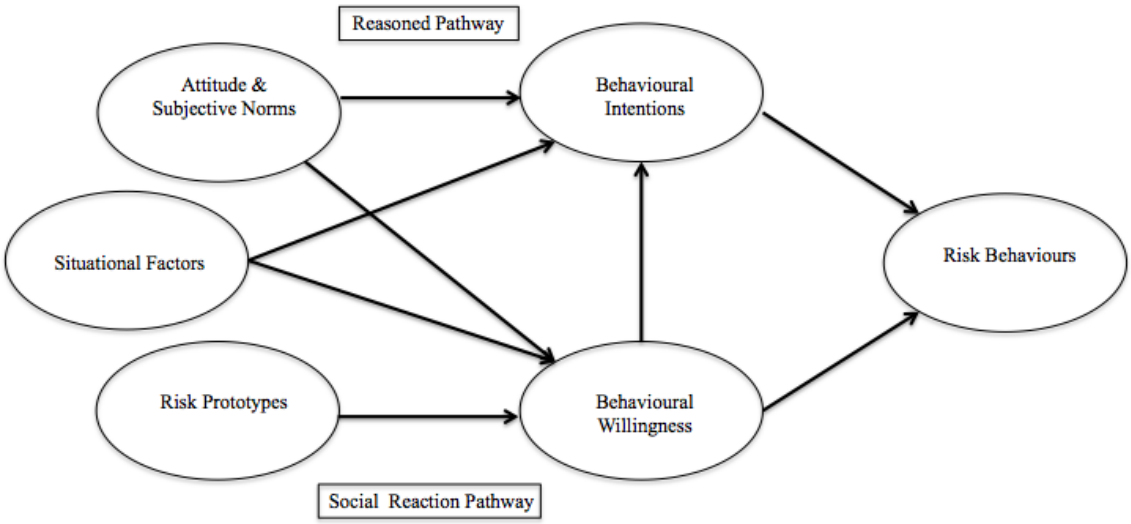
The Prototype Willingness Model can be adopted to synthesise the overall findings of the current study, utilising both the social and reasoned pathways explained by Gerrard et al (2008). The risk prototype construct in the social reaction pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model was demonstrated through participants' prior engagement in illegal activities, making their decision to flee habitual as it was just a part of their anti-social lifestyle, the knowledge and use of techniques, as well as the influence of their peers, highlighting their prototype favourability and similarity to those who engage in fleeing driver incidents. Behavioural willingness to engage in a fleeing driver incident was demonstrated by participants' lack of fear for consequences, the effects of substance use and fear of mistreatment if they were to be caught. Participants attitudes and subjective norms have been identified as anti-police attitudes, and a combative mindset manifesting as "them vs us". These attitudes increase participant's behavioural intentions to flee from police, and highlighting the reasoned pathway of the model.

Although the Prototype Willingness Model can be adopted to highlight and explain many of the factors and mechanisms that influence an individual's decision to flee from police, it fails to identify situational factors that could further contribute to an offender's behavioural willingness and intentions to flee from police that were identified in the current study. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, situational factors could be added as an additional construct of the Prototype Willingness Model, having a varying effect on both an individual's behavioural willingness and behavioural

intention to flee from police. The current study identified situational factors such as being in a stolen car, breaching bail or parole conditions, or being in the possession of drugs or illegal guns, as contributing to participants overall behavioural willingness and behavioural intention to flee from police. Additional research into the impact of situational factors on motivation to engage in risk behaviour is needed to further inform this suggested amendment to the Prototype Willingness Model. Additionally, the Prototype Willingness Model has only been applied to adolescent risk behaviour; additional research could be conducted to investigate whether the Prototype Willingness Model could be utilised to explain adults' decisions to engage in risk behaviours.

Figure 2

Prototype Willingness Model Including Situational Factors



Note. This figure was adapted from Barati, M., Allahverdipour, H., Hidarnia, A., & Niknami, S. (2015). *Journal of research in health sciences*, *15*(2), 113-118.

Implications and Applications

By drawing on factors reported by individuals who have fled from police, and their passengers, the current study contributes to building a knowledge base regarding fleeing driver events in New Zealand. The main purpose of the current study was to identify and outline the motivations, circumstances and factors that contribute to an individual's decision to flee from police. Identifying both static and dynamic individual and situational factors that increase an individual's willingness to flee from the police is important in informing current police policy, as well as informing road safety initiative and prevention strategies.

The current study suggested that many offenders believed fleeing was worth the risk, and that they had a good chance of getting away. This highlights that the current initiatives and consequences used in fleeing driver events aren't acting as an effective deterrent in all cases. Therefore, further focus could be placed on Police initiatives that will increase the likelihood of offenders being apprehended either during or after the fleeing driver event. An example of this could be by placing greater emphasis and importance on the inquiry phase, following an event where the offender has gotten away. This could increase offender accountability, and increase the chances of them getting caught. Another example to increase apprehension could be to increase helicopter presence, install dash-mounted cameras to help identify offenders, and explore other options to remotely disable or track fleeing driver vehicles. Thus, by increasing certainty of punishment the experience of punishment avoidance is likely to decrease or diminish, thereby, effectively disincentivising evading police and decreasing its viability as a punishment avoidance technique.

In addition, the current study has indicated that the majority of participants did not plan or seek to get in a chase; rather, fleeing was a part of their prior engagement in

illegal activities, demonstrating participants' behavioural willingness to engage in a pursuit rather than behavioural intent. Therefore, in order to prevent further fleeing driver events, further effort could be placed on developing and implementing effective prevention strategies for general crimes such as, vehicle theft, aggravated robberies, and drug use.

Further, the current study indicated that anti-police attitudes, fear of police mistreatment, and distrust in police can increase offenders' behavioural willingness and behavioural intention to flee. The current study also identified that negative previous experiences both personally and vicariously have a detrimental effect on communities' attitudes towards police. Increased efforts could be placed on improving overall perceived procedural justice, as it is pivotal in the relationship between police, offenders, and their compliance. Therefore, in order to foster positive relationships and create a greater sense of perceived procedural justice, initiatives such as community days with police and the wider community could be facilitated. Additionally, Police could seek to strengthen partnerships with local Iwi, to identify strategies and efforts to improve the cultural responsiveness and safety of Police practice.

One of the main objectives of this study was to identify individual motivations and factors that impact an individuals decision to flee from police. With the use of the Prototype Willingness Model, the study has been able to identify broad factors identifying the type of person or 'risk prototype' of an individual who is at higher risk of fleeing from police. With these findings, and with further research, interventions could potentially be developed and targeted at an individual, group and societal level. For instance, psychoeducational prevention material could potentially be developed and distributed at events for young adults and youth. Individual interventions or psychoeducational material could focus on developing pro-social decision-making, and

the identification of risks in engaging in a fleeing driver event. At a societal level, highlighting the detrimental consequences of a fleeing driver event (e.g. likelihood of being apprehended, or risk of death for drivers, passengers, and bystanders) in the media may change potential offenders' perceptions of the typical risk prototype for fleeing drivers, decreasing their anticipation of positive rewards, or punishment avoidance as a consequence of fleeing.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations of the current study that should be noted. Firstly, there was a relatively small sample size for both Pasifika and female drivers in the study. This limitation restricts the development of strong conclusions about themes regarding female and Pasifika drivers. The second limitation refers to the sampling method used in this study. The method utilised to recruit participants for this research was convenience sampling using a snowballing technique. There was a diverse range of participants recruited, however, this technique likely leads to biases in who was recruited for the research. For example, the current study's sample is limited to participants willing to disclose they have been in a police chase. Further, a substantial number of participants were recruited through Oranga Tamariki, and therefore may be a skew in the under 20s sample towards individuals with extensive criminal backgrounds, as well as potential histories of trauma or disruption. Another limitation of the current study was retrospective recall. In some cases, participants were recalling their experiences in a fleeing driver event that had taken place years before, therefore, the accuracy of their description could be limited.

Future Research

This study has provided a preliminary understanding of the reported motivations of fleeing drivers that have either successfully evaded police or been apprehended in

New Zealand and it can inform directions for future research in the domain of fleeing drivers. A quantitative research method could be adopted to further investigate the relationship between motivational factors identified in this study and the decision to evade police. Research could be conducted to further explore the situational factors that increase an individual's willingness to flee from police, in order to inform early interventions to prevent further fleeing driver events and creating safer roads in New Zealand, as well as further informing the Prototype Willingness Model. Additionally, future research could ensure that fleeing drivers are interviewed closer to the event, and conduct qualitative or quantitative research that seeks to replicate the themes identified in this study.

The current study has contributed to the field of fleeing driver research by identifying motivators and situational factors that influence an individual’s decision to flee, using a sample of both apprehended offenders, and offenders who successfully evaded police. Findings from the current study could be utilised to further inform intervention and prevention strategies to reduce the frequency of fleeing driver events and the risk it poses on the wider community.

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Appendix A

Interview guide – Fleeing drivers research

[Remember to take some time to build rapport with the participant prior to beginning the formal/structured part of the interview]

Introduction to research

- Introduction of interviewers, acknowledgement of participants' contributions and thanks for their time.
- Overview of the research and interview.
- Complete informed consent process (read through main points in information sheet) and ask if the participant has any questions. If interview taking place over Zoom/phone, consent can be provided verbally by the participant.
- Check if it's okay to take written notes and/or audio record the interview.

Interview

1. **To start with, we want to know what you think about Police chases in general. What have you seen in the news or on social media about Police chases?**

Prompts if information not spontaneously offered:

- What do you think about what you have seen in the news or on social media?
- Do you know anyone who has fled from Police? If so, what do you think about it?

2. **Now we want to ask about your experience of being in a Police chase. Can you tell me about a time that you were in a Police chase? If you have been in more than one chase, tell me about the one that you remember best.**

Prompts if information not spontaneously offered:

- What can you remember about the start of that day?
- Were you the driver or a passenger?
    - Who else were you with? What is your relationship with that person/people?
- Can you remember where you were going or what you were doing when you started driving?
    - Were you in an area you knew well?
- What happened as soon as you noticed the Police while you were driving/in the car?
    - How did you first notice the Police?
- What happened during the chase?
    - How did the other people in the car react (*if applicable*)?
    - Where did you go and how long did the chase last?
- How did the chase finish?
- What happened after the chase finished?

    - Can you remember if you talked to anyone about the chase? If so, who and what was their reaction? Why did you decide to tell that person about the chase?
- What else was going on in your life at the time?
    - Has anything changed in your life since the chase?
- What have your previous experiences with Police been like?

3. **Can you tell me what was going through your mind at the time?** ***[Ask at each stage they describe in question 1]***
   Prompts if information not spontaneously offered:
    - What thoughts did you have about the Police?
    - Were you thinking about whether Police would chase or not?
    - Did you have a plan for what you would do during the chase?
        - What was your plan for the chase?
        - At what point did you decide what to do?
    - What did you think would happen after the chase?
        - Can you tell me about any thoughts you had about whether you would be caught?
        - Can you tell me any thoughts you had about what the punishment might be (e.g., arrest, car crushed, fine etc).

4. **Can you tell me how you were feeling at the time?** ***[Ask at each stage they describe in question 1]***

5. **What did you think about the chance of getting caught, at the time of the chase?**

Prompts if information not spontaneously offered:
- Have your thoughts about this changed since being in a chase?

6. **What's changed for you since you've been in a chase?**

Prompts if information not spontaneously offered:
- Did you talk to anyone about the chase? If so, who and what was their reaction? Why did you decide to tell that person about the chase?
- Has it made you more or less likely to be in another chase?
- How do you feel about the chase now?
- If I could take you back to being in that car again, what would you do differently?

7. **Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**

Thank participant for their time, and arrange best option for getting voucher to them.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Ref: HEC 2020/26

29 May 2020

Dr Jacinta Cording
Psychology, Speech and Hearing
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Jacinta

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "Research on Fleeing Driver Events" has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 29th May 2020.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dean Sutherland
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee